

\* History of \*

Immaculate Heart  
of Mary Parish





# History of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish



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Immaculate Heart of Mary Church

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## B A C K G R O U N D

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earlong celebrations honoring the approaching centennial anniversary of The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish (its original name) are a far cry from the hostile reception to its organization in 1894. That event was marked with public denunciation, accusations of forming a schismatic church, excommunication and attack by a mob.

Such uncharacteristically violent reactions to a new church were due to its unorthodox founding and a chain of events that began in the early 1880's. A familiarity with this background and the personalities involved is necessary to understand this turbulent reception.

The stage was set for future confrontations in 1882 when new arrivals from Poland were hired in New York to work in the *Cleveland Rolling Mills*. The Poles, not realizing they were pawns in a scheme to drive out competition and crush a bitter labor dispute, eagerly took advantage of the job offers.

By the time they discovered their wage of \$7.50 for a 14-hour, six-day week was \$4.50 below the prevailing rate and that they were employed to take away the livelihood of others, it was too late. Many of them, and other countrymen who came later, had no other marketable skills or money to return to their native land. Trapped in a situation they unwittingly helped create, the new immigrants were forced to endure the contempt and scorn of workers they replaced and the rancor of other ethnic groups.

In this inhospitable environment, these newcomers, isolated by language and cultural differences, depended upon each other and those among them who understood English and American ways for survival. Translators often took advantage of this situation to gain their own ends by distorting facts in Polish versions of important issues.

It was also difficult for these people, whose nation and their own conduct were controlled by alternating German and Russian overlords, to grasp the meaning of freedom. A number of them

confused liberty with license to defy lawful authority, especially episcopal rule.

In their zeal to cast off all things European, a significant minority of Poles living in midwestern states began to form parishioner-owned, independent American Catholic churches, free from foreign and papal domination. The majority were outraged by this schism and remained loyal to the pope. Reactions to the movement accomplished something no outsider could have ever achieved, dividing the close-knit Poles into separate camps.

At the center of this controversy was the founder of our parish, a leading religious figure of his day who was also active in the independent church movement, Rev. Anton Francis Kolaszewski.

Born in Elzbietow, Poland on September 5, 1851, he was brought to our country at about the age of eight where he received a lifelong source of pride, an American education. After completing studies at the Franciscan College in Teutopolis, Illinois and St. Mary Seminary in Cleveland, he was ordained at the seminary by Bishop Gilmour on July 1, 1883.

His involvement in the community began on August 5, 1883 when he was named pastor of St. Stanislaus, where he immediately set about making improvements. A rectory was built in the fall and the frame church was enlarged in early 1884.

However, this latter expansion soon proved to be inadequate. Increasing membership turned his attention toward replacing the temporary church located on the second floor of a wood building with a large brick and stone structure.

Bishop Gilmour gave permission for this project when financial statements and estimates of future



Rev. Anton Kolaszewski, founding pastor of the church of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

revenues submitted by Rev. Kolaszewski and parish leaders appeared sufficient to proceed with the undertaking. Consent inspired action and the foundation was laid during August, 1886.

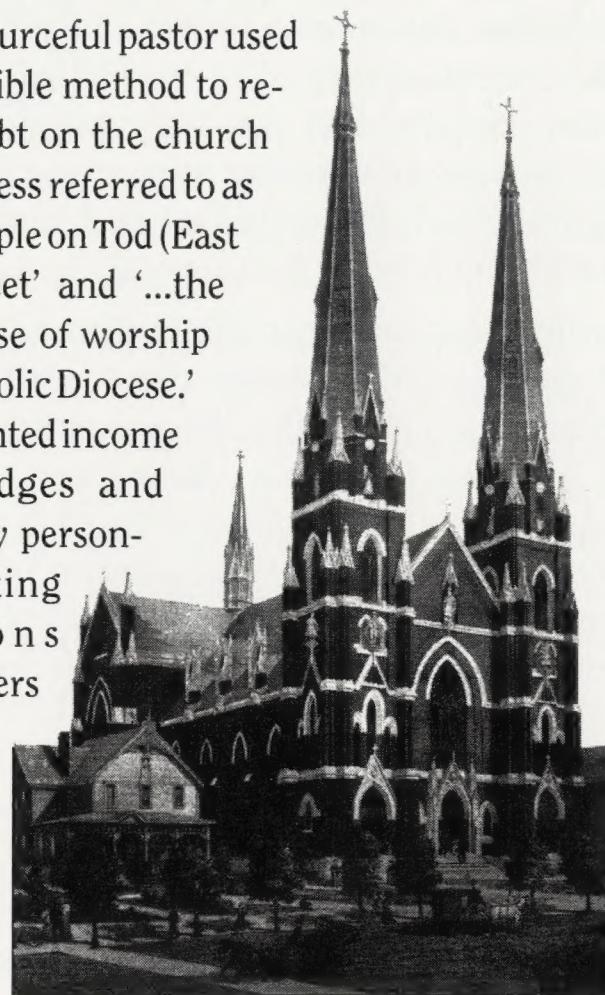
The resourceful pastor used every possible method to retire the debt on the church that the press referred to as the '...Temple on Tod (East 65th) Street' and '...the finest house of worship in the Catholic Diocese.' He augmented income from pledges and benefits by personally seeking donations from workers as they left their jobs on payday.

How-ever, even this im-pos-ing structure

soon became too small to accommodate the growing population of the area. By the late 1880's over 200 families settled in the Brecksville Road (East 71st St.), Harvard Avenue district elected to form their own parish.

Rev. Kolaszewski asked for and received permission to purchase land for Sacred Heart Parish and offered the first Mass there on Christmas Day, 1889. Although his assistants at St. Stanislaus conducted the majority of religious services, he was technically pastor of the new church until Rev. Felix Orzechowski was appointed to that post in 1891.

Despite such accomplishments and the forging of a strong bond between himself and many members of his congregation, temperament and circumstances conspired against this well-intentioned pastor. Dissenters accused him of favoring parishioners from certain Polish districts and his own assistant, Rev. Motulewski, accused his superior of



St. Stanislaus Church, dedicated November 15, 1891

various improprieties, including selling tickets to go to confession. These allegations were in response to Rev. Kolaszewski's request that his assistant be removed for undermining pastoral authority.

It is evident from a reply dated November 4, 1890 that the Bishop had expressed dissatisfaction with Rev. Kolaszewski. In his letter the pastor answers,



*"I am working for four priests and not for me. I have more people to care for than the Pastor of the Cathedral and I am for the greater part alone . . . My time is occupied with my good people. With everything they come to me. I am their advisor, contractor, lawyer, doctor, father, brother, friend and very often their judge. I work at this 18 hours a day. I am never at rest. What do you want of me? Do I not work enough?"*



It was actually the bishop's long illness rather than this eloquent defense that prevented corrective measures being taken sooner. After the bishop's death, Vicar-General and Administrator of the Diocese, Msgr. Felix Boff, did consult the Bishop of Cincinnati about the matter but no action was taken until the appointment of Bishop Horstmann in 1892.

Constant bickering between the pastor and his assistant, complaints from certain parishioners, and an allegation that Rev. Kolaszewski kept in contact with Rev. Kolasinski, an ex-priest who had established an independent church in Detroit, prompted Bishop Horstmann to investigate the problems. During this inquiry an undisclosed condition relating to a near crisis surfaced.

A close call that occurred in 1878 was the basis for the most serious charge leveled against Rev. Kolaszewski. At that time the Cincinnati Diocese went bankrupt which gave creditors the option to call in loans by claiming church property as

payment. Urgent negotiations averted that calamity but the possibility of such a catastrophe so alarmed Ohio bishops that they set strict limits on the amount of debt a parish could incur.

The finances of St. Stanislaus were in a shambles. The estimated costs of between \$37,000 and \$41,000 submitted to Bishop Gilmour in 1886 reached \$150,000. Constructing what was, and remains, the second largest Gothic style church in the United States (St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City holds that honor) was too ambitious for the resources of its working class congregation, resulting in a \$100,000 debt that had been concealed from the diocese.

No doubt, receipt of all promised pledges would not have prevented this financial disaster but the shocking deficit was increased because of economic conditions. The price of silver had plummeted bringing on a world-wide depression. By 1892 many Cleveland banks closed and there was widespread unemployment. This created a situation where many pledges made in good faith could not be honored because donors were out of work.

The results of the bishop's investigation made a meeting with Rev. Kolaszewski mandatory. About a week after this meeting the pastor agreed to voluntarily resign his position without notifying parishioners. After the last Mass on June 8, 1892, he was to permanently leave Cleveland and accept an assignment in Syracuse, New York. In exchange for cooperating, he was promised reimbursement of personal funds given for the upkeep of St. Stanislaus and toward the purchase of land for Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish.

The departure of Rev. Kolaszewski failed to quell the turmoil at St. Stanislaus. Friction not only arose between the pro-Kolaszewski faction and the new pastor, Rev. Benedict Rosinski, but also among other parish members. Although many championed the new pastor, and some among them suggested he be replaced with another pastor both factions would accept, those striving for the return of the former pastor continued to press their demands.

Two delegates attempted to force the issue through a meeting with the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop Satolli of Washington, D.C., and later claimed that he promised them Rev. Kolaszewski's reinstatement. He denied the allegation, instructed the dissenters to obey their bishop, but privately advised Bishop Horstmann to consider appointing a different pastor. Fearing it would weaken his authority, the bishop rejected the proposal.

Other than a number of unconfirmed reports and scandalous insinuations, there is little reliable information about Rev. Kolaszewski's activities in Syracuse. It is known that he was immediately appointed founding pastor of the city's first Polish church, Sacred Heart Parish, and on April 1, 1894, was officially relieved of all priestly duties, supposedly for involvement in the independent church movement.

Meanwhile, word had reached Cleveland of his impending dismissal, intensifying the drive for his reinstatement as pastor of St. Stanislaus. Promoters had petitioned Archbishop Satolli as early as February, and in March, Bishop Horstmann, the archbishop, some parishioners, and Rev. Kolaszewski all exchanged letters about the situation. The ex-pastor personally pleaded his case before the Apostolic Delegate on April 5th, which, according to his version, resulted in the prelate endorsing his work despite the latter's public and private support of the bishop.

The Kolaszewski faction intensified their efforts by presenting an April 20th, 600-signature petition restating their demands to the bishop. When he tested their sincerity by asking would they form another church if he did not comply, they indecisively replied, "That is a hard question."

Meanwhile, Rev. Kolaszewski had decided to visit his friend in Detroit, Rev. Dominic Kolasinski, a priest who incurred the wrath of church authorities by establishing the first independent Catholic church in the United States. Even though this errant pastor had returned to the fold, parishioners were allowed to retain title to church properties until all debts were paid.



## THE CHURCH IS ORGANIZED

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omeone telegraphed Cleveland friends that their former pastor was in Detroit. A committee went there to persuade him to return to his people, but, at first he was reluctant to accept their invitation. However, further coaxing weakened his resolve and he eventually gave in to their pleas.

It is certain that he, the delegates and, no doubt, Rev. Kolasinski made initial plans to establish an independent church if the bishop denied his reinstatement as pastor. This is evident from the rapid, yet well-organized manner of its being put into operation and Rev. Kolasinski's final admonition, "Do nothing till you see the bishop. If he receives you, well. If not, better."

He took his friends' advice. He and some members of his party called on the bishop the day he arrived in Cleveland. He later described this stormy May 2, 1894 encounter,



*We were ushered into his room and I was the last to enter. He had not the slightest idea that I was anywhere near Cleveland, and when he saw me he said, 'Mr. Kolaszewski, I do not care to talk to you.'*

*I waited until he was through and then I bowed low and said, 'Good morning reverend bishop.' 'I do not want to talk to you,' he cried. 'I have nothing to say to you.' 'But I have to you most reverend bishop,' said I. 'I wish you to leave this house,' he cried in the same loud tones. 'I have a right in this house,' I said. 'It is my house. My people helped to build it.' 'I do not want to have anything to say to you,' he declared again. 'In the name of justice,' I said, 'give me my church for which my people paid and which they own.' 'Never,' he said. 'Then*

*permit me to build another church,' I said. 'Never,' he said again. 'Then reverend bishop.' I said respectfully, 'we will build our own church and keep it in our own name and ever look to you as its spiritual head. If you impose a tax we will cheerfully pay it but we will keep our own property in our own name.' 'I forbid you to build a church,' he cried. 'We wish you a good morning reverend bishop,' I said, and we withdrew.*



Aware that his hopes for reinstatement as pastor were dashed, Rev. Kolaszewski and his eager congregation proceeded to establish their own church. The outcome of the Rev. Kolasinski case convinced him that once the church was built and had the congregation's support, it would be admitted into the diocese.

The following morning, May 3rd and Polish Constitution Day, Rev. Kolaszewski rode in a closed carriage that was escorted by three honor guards from his temporary residence at 75 Union Street (6607-09 Union Avenue) to Szach's Hall, 136 Fleet Street (southeast corner of Fleet Avenue and East 54th Street). Hundreds of well-wishers lined the sidewalks to welcome his return with cheers and waving hands as he passed the open doors of St. Stanislaus and the homes of Polish families along the way.

When he arrived at the hall he spoke for two hours justifying his actions by explaining they were motivated by concern for the welfare of his people. When the hectic, overcrowded meeting finally began, his followers wanted to elect him pastor for life, but legal constraints limited his term to 99 years.

Other business completed at the meeting pertained to the church's organization. A tentative name, the Church of the Sacred Heart of St. Mary, was chosen, a constitution was ratified, trustees

were elected, plans for soliciting funds approved, and authorization was given to purchase land on Fremont Street (Lansing Avenue).

A St. Francis Society was formed the afternoon of Sunday, May 6th, but Mass had been postponed until a more suitable location could be found. The hall, being over a saloon, was not considered an appropriate place to conduct this sacred service.

Rev. Rosinski, pastor of St. Stanislaus, took advantage of the delay to influence revolting parishioners who fulfilled their Sunday obligation at his church. He warned the congregation to have nothing to do with the new church and denounced everyone involved with its formation of being guilty of schism of the most pronounced kind.

His eloquent sermon so stirred his audience that all, including the dissenting faction, swore "never to belong to any but a true Roman Catholic Church." However, that group interpreted the oath in a different light. They viewed themselves as true Catholics who would choose their own pastor and would retain stewardship of their church properties.

The seceding faction, hoping the bishop would be forced to officially recognize their unsanctioned church once it was in operation, immediately began turning aspirations into realities. *Articles of Incorporation* under the church's finalized title, the Church of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, were filed in Cuyahoga County on May 10th and with the State of Ohio on the 11th.

The deed was not processed until June but the Ruggles Estate permitted church construction to begin on May 19th. About 100 unemployed workers began preparing the land for a frame church that, according to the contractor, would be completed by August.

Although Rev. Kolaszewski had moved to 42 Poland Street (3926 East 66th Street), the first Mass was offered on May 20th in a larger home at 59 Poland Street (3945 East 66th Street). This residence served as their church until the impatient congregation began attending Mass in the partially constructed church on June 17th.

The house at 59 Poland Court (3945 East 66th Street) where the first parish Mass was celebrated.



There was speculation that the new church of about 300 families would affiliate with the National Polish Alliance and, later, when Archbishop Vilatte of the Independent Catholic Church conducted dedication services there were fears that they would join that group. Neither supposition materialized because Rev. Kolaszewski, rejecting certain tenets of both organizations, chose to adhere to traditional Catholic dogma and ritual.

On Wednesday, June 6th, the pastor's Poland Street home was acquired in the name of Rev. A.F. Kolaszewski, trustee, et al, for \$1,100 from Jacob and Waronika Nock. On that same day, 16 of the 18 lots comprising our present church properties were purchased in the name of the parish trustees from the Ruggles Estate for \$7,000.

On or near this same date, Rev. Kolaszewski entered into a land contract agreement with William and Mary Wood for the slightly-over 14-acre St. Mary Cemetery plot. The \$6,200 note was redeemed on October 7, 1897 and title to the property was transferred to the Church of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Everyone was anxiously awaiting the bishop's reaction to the establishment of an independent church and on Wednesday, June 20th their curiosity was satisfied. A notice of major excommunication was pronounced against Rev. Kolaszewski and was published in all churches of the diocese on Sunday, the 24th. In addition, parishioners were ordered to cease membership in, and support of, the non-affiliated church. Trustees were



warned to immediately resign their positions or incur *ipso facto* excommunication.

Bishop Horstmann used every means at his disposal to avoid taking this drastic and painful step. He had a near weekly exchange of letters with Archbishop Satolli and the prelate's secretary, Dr. Papi, about the situation. Attempts to communicate with Rev. Kolaszewski proved futile and the actions of the renegade church and its obstinate leader made any compromise impossible.

The defection could have been averted by reinstating Rev. Kolaszewski as pastor of St. Stanislaus, but this would only revive the problems and animosities of the past. Furthermore, the ex-pastor's conduct was so suspect during that period that Cardinal Ledochowski, Prefect of the Propaganda in Rome, had summoned him there to answer charges in 1892. However, due to the Syracuse transfer, the letter was not delivered until May, 1894.

Accepting the independent church into the diocese was also unthinkable. To prevent a schism, parishioner ownership may have been tolerated, but, barring other obstacles, the first sentence of Article XX in its own constitution provided grounds for excommunication. "As we who have adopted the above articles do not believe any human being can be infallible, even if he call himself a pope of Rome" ...denied a fundamental doctrine of Roman Catholicism.

His sanction of this heresy and contempt for ecclesiastical authority by ignoring the bishop's orders not to form a church and a directive forbidding him to say Mass or exercise other priestly functions under threat of excommunication provided further grounds. Failure to appear before a Wednesday, June 20th ecclesiastical court exhausted the patient bishop's options to avert the unpleasant outcome.

At June 24th services, Rev. Kolaszewski said the bishop had no jurisdiction over him so the edict was invalid. He further cited that not committing a serious crime, receiving no trial, neither he nor his attorney being present when sentence was pronounced, and that he had answered both letters the bishop claimed were ignored, as

further proofs of his innocence.

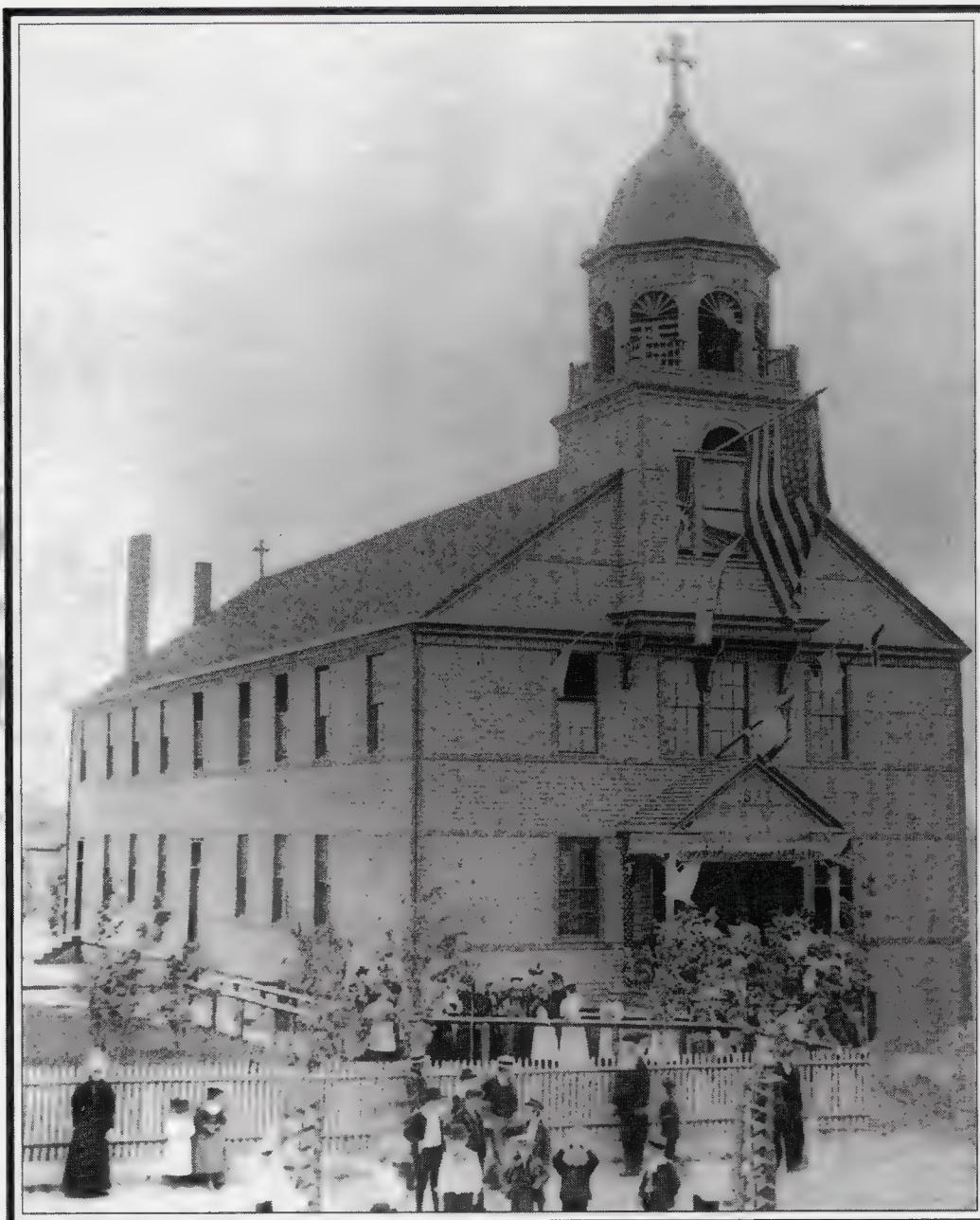
A meeting of the St. Joseph Society of St. Stanislaus Church was held that same evening. By the meeting's end a scuffle broke out and the Society split into two groups when members of our church were expelled. One of these, the treasurer, took the \$500 in the treasury for his group prompting The Cleveland Leader to quip, "One faction has the cash and the other the flags."

Despite statements by Archbishop Satolli to the contrary, Rev. Kolaszewski claimed that at their April meeting the prelate offered him justice and protection. In a frantic effort to overrule Bishop Horstmann he wrote the archbishop a letter on July 2nd requesting him to come to Cleveland and give him justice. He added that the church and cemetery must soon be dedicated and if His Excellency could not perform the rite they would be forced to use a Syrian, independent bishop, a veiled threat not dignified with an answer. Instead Archbishop Satolli directed his reply to the bishop which also included the arrogant letter and a most unflattering assessment of Rev. Kolaszewski.

Loyal members of St. Stanislaus were grieved by the defection of fellow parishioners, lifelong friends, and even family members to the illicit church. Daily newspaper accounts of the exploits of this group and their defiant pastor only increased tensions. A minority of over-zealous militants tried to remove this embarrassing and resented blot on the neighborhood's reputation by shaming and intimidating these fallen-away brethren into abandoning their schism.

An expression of this disdain occurred on July 15th as 48 children made their First Holy Communion. During these services some men from St. Stanislaus threw a boisterous beer party on vacant land next to our church, putting Rev. Kolaszewski's promise that his group would commit no violence to the test. To their credit, the congregation remained indifferent to these noisy revelers and made no effort to retaliate.

On Sunday, August 19th, Archbishop Vilatte of Green Bay, Wisconsin dedicated the church and then, in the company of Rev. Kolaszewski led a procession to consecrate the cemetery. these two



The frame church/school of the Immaculate Heart of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary, dedicated August 19, 1894.

Accompanied by three mounted policemen, the pair rode in the first of two carriages with the congregation following on foot in orderly fashion.

When the marchers approached the corners of Marceline (East 71st Street) and Deveny they were met by an angry mob made up of misguided members of St. Stanislaus. This boisterous gang yelled insults and derided the non-violent parade and one of the troublemakers hurled a huge stone at them. As no one was injured the group proceeded on to the cemetery.

Upon their return from the cemetery the procession was greeted by a larger crowd of hecklers, many of whom eyewitnesses claimed were motivated more by alcohol than religious zeal, who renewed their vicious verbal attacks. For some unknown reason a melee suddenly erupted with two members of the procession being wounded.

One man received a nasty scalp wound and an elderly gentleman was shot in the calf of his leg. At the sound of the gun both sides quickly scattered.

When they were safely back in church Archbishop Vilatte bolstered the congregation's shaken confidence. He made the point that their's was a truly Catholic church and they were Catholics who would leave this precious heritage to their children. He continued, "Yes, we are all Catholics. Let us ever remain so, never relinquishing one iota of our Catholic dogma, even though we insist on our right to own our property in our own name."

Sunday's scandalous assault stemmed from the outcast church timing its convention to form a national independent Catholic church for Poles to coincide with the 21st annual convention of the *Roman Catholic National Polish Union* hosted by St. Stanislaus. Fortunately during the gathering of

these two opposing organizations peace was maintained, the only battles being verbal.

The eight-state independent movement had lent moral and financial support to Rev. Kolaszewski's cause since early May and Buffalo sympathizers so admired the pastor that they sent him a large, handsomely illustrated bible as a token of their esteem. As our church did not veer from its course of flouting episcopal authority, it was the preferred location to launch their Polish diocese.

The convention began on Tuesday the 21st. Our church constitution, modeled after that of the United States, was presented as an example for the projected national church. The delegates found it particularly significant, especially the notorious article XX. The convention concluded on Friday the 24th, with the ordination of a Rev. Kaminski.

While the bishop was making his mandatory visit to Rome, Rev. Kolaszewski made an overture toward reconciliation to acting Diocesan Administrator, Msgr. Felix Boff. He took advantage of this absence to enlist help from the sometimes-friend who sat next to him at the November 15, 1891 St. Stanislaus dedication banquet, to arrange his church's return to the fold. Not only did this and other attempts to return come to nothing, but an opposite reaction to his conduct was already in progress.

Rev. Kolaszewski's contention that since he was not accepted into the diocese only the pope had the power to excommunicate him, initiated further action. After the bishop returned from Rome he was notified by Cardinal Ledochowski that on January 30, 1895, The Inquisitors, approved by the pope on the 31st, had issued a formal declaration of excommunication of Rev. Kolaszewski.

However, it was not this dire decree which could be and eventually was rescinded that prevented acceptance into the diocese. The pastor's refusal to offer any concessions or reconsider parishioner ownership created an impasse between the two churchmen that would not be resolved during the bishop's lifetime.

That same year the parish rectory, which remained in use until 1965, was built, and on February 11, 1896 church properties were redeeded

to the pastor. This transfer was probably made because a loan would soon be required and could be more easily secured if title was in a pastor's name.

It was a common practice during the nineteenth century for American parishes to seek loans in Europe. Money was readily available and the risk of foreclosure was minimized. It was also recognized that the parish's independent status made the prospect of obtaining a mortgage in this country almost nil, so an overseas creditor was sought out. This plan succeeded when John Billsboro, Bishop of the small Diocese of Salford, County Lancaster, England granted a loan of \$25,000.

Terms of the agreement, dated October 5, 1897, called for repayment of principal plus an added 5.5% interest charge in annual installments. These payments were to be made in gold at the Archbishop's house in Montreal, Canada.

Active resistance to the parishioner-owned church had almost died out by 1898. Other than a constant financial struggle to keep the fledgling church in operation, only three other events stand out in its 14-year history. On Sunday May 5, 1901, the community marked the 110th anniversary of Polish Independence Day with banners, parades, bands, religious, and social events. Rev. Kolaszewski used this occasion to celebrate the seventh anniversary of his church's founding. Festivities began with a 7:00 AM parade to welcome independent Armenian Bishop Kozlowski of Chicago, confirmation of 70 children plus an unknown number of adults, and concluded with a grand program in the evening attended by over 100 guests.

The pastor also procured the services of an assistant, Rev. Andrew Ryczek, in 1905, but neither of these events compares to the near disastrous fire of Tuesday, May 12, 1908.

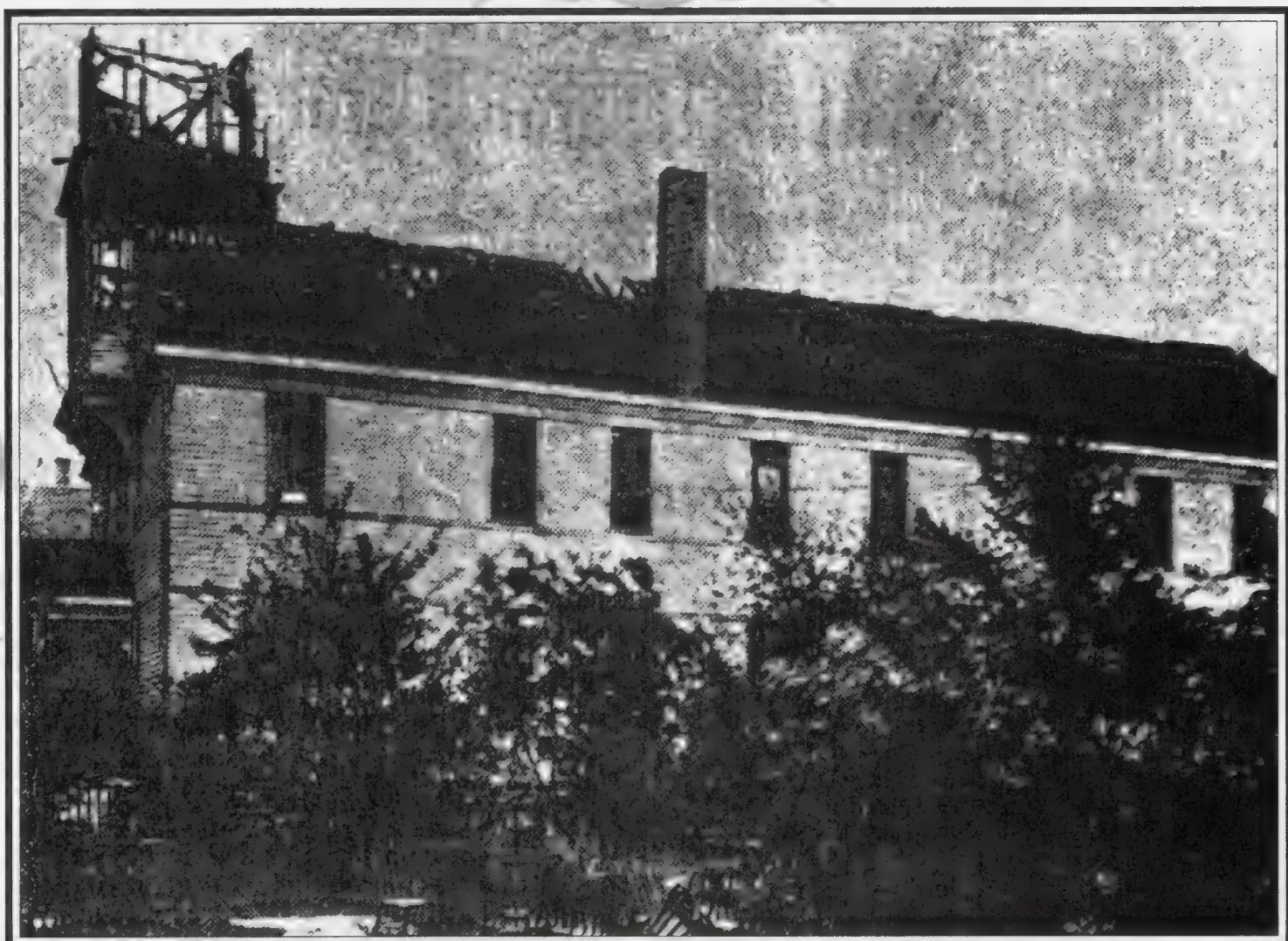
The destructive blaze, blamed on a smoldering censer left under the altar after a funeral service, razed the steeple, consumed a large section of the roof, and charred most of the church and school interior. A \$1,935.40 claim paid by *The German Allied Insurance Company* confirmed the extensive structural damage but gave no clue to the catastrophic loss of life that was averted by two brave men.

At the first sign of fire, a fast thinking teacher, Anthony Matuszewski, calmly called an unscheduled recess and, with the aid of the sexton, John Gosurnski, marched the 60 children out of the school to safety. The sexton also rescued and revived Rev. Kolaszewski who was overcome by smoke attempting to save church vestments.

Rapid response by firemen summoned by a telephone lineman working across the street prevented the fire from spreading to nearby homes. After

three-quarters of an hour and a close call for fire fighters when the steeple crashed to the ground, the blaze was finally extinguished.

The fire would force students to finish the school year in a private home and an unforeseen change in parish status would make them attend public schools the following year. However, the mood of that disastrous day was best expressed by the tears streaming down the pastor's face as he helplessly watched darting flames trying to consume his beloved church.



The church of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary after the disastrous fire of May 12, 1908.

## THE PRODIGAL CHURCH RETURNS

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hen Bishop Horstmann passed away in 1908, Msgr. Boff again became the administrator of the diocese. Through the initiative of Rev. Kalamaja, O.F.M. the current pastor of St. Stanislaus, he and Bishop Koudelka of Cincinnati began the process that would bring the independent parish into the diocese. Rev. Kolaszewski fully cooperated with these efforts.

On Sunday, August 30, 1908, three fourths of Immaculate Heart of Mary parishioners voted to transfer church properties to Msgr. Boff and in early September Rev. Kolaszewski and a committee sent a letter to the administrator applying for admittance into the diocese.

Our parish was officially affiliated with the diocese on September 15th and the end of the schism was formally ratified during services conducted on October 24th. Msgr. Boff absolved the congregation and Rev. Kalamaja, Pastor of St. Stanislaus, delivered the sermon and introduced the new parish administrator, Rev. Methodius Kielar, O.F.M.

Msgr. Boff reassured members that their dead could continue to be buried in the cemetery and it would remain intact for that purpose. He likewise made it clear no debt would be imposed on them without the bishop's consent and the knowledge of the congregation and councilmen.

He received the keys to the church at this ceremony and was deeded all properties on December 10th. Title was turned over to Bishop Farrelly when he was appointed to that office in 1909.

No finer example of the truth of The Savior's



Rev. Methodius Kielar, O.F.M., first administrator of the parish after its admission into the diocese.



words, "Love covers a multitude of sins" can be found than the reaction of Rev. Kolaszewski to Msgr. Boff's efforts. Our Lord knew that even though His servant was unorthodox, independent, and rebelled against lawful authority, the priest was motivated more by love and concern for his flock than self-advancement. Through His clergy a way was provided for the pastor and his followers to end their long period of isolation.

The bishop's excommunication had been lifted on September 4th, but it was November 8th when Cardinal Gotti informed Msgr. Boff that Pope Pius X had given the administrator power to absolve Rev. Kolaszewski of all censures. The contrite priest left the parish to spend some weeks doing penance and publicly asking pardon for the scandal caused by his actions during the past 14 years. These acts of atonement were preceded by an even greater sacrifice, stepping aside as pastor and separating himself from his devoted parishioners.

He was retired January 7, 1909, and, despite hopes of being returned to the active priesthood, this was to be denied him. After years of declining health brought on by a deteriorating heart and kidney condition, he passed away at the home of his sister on Friday, December 2, 1910. Funeral rites were said at St. Boniface Church and he was buried with fellow priests of the diocese in section nine at Calvary Cemetery.

The passing of time permits a more accurate appraisal of our first pastor's contributions than was possible during his era. Contemporaries, influenced by an atmosphere of division and hostility, could not foresee that the church he built, the parish for which he purchased land and of which he oversaw the beginning, and the independent parish he founded, would still be active, vital members of the community a century later – living monuments that proclaim his accomplishments more effectively than any words of praise.



## A NEW BEGINNING

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etween the last months of 1908 to early 1912 the parish was managed by a succession of administrators, Reverends M. Keilar, O.F.M. 1908-1909; A. Migdalski, January to October 1909; J. Darowski, October 1909 to July 1910; and B. Walter, 1910-1912. In 1909 nuns from the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis began taking charge of the school.

A move to recall the 1897 loan was temporarily dropped when it was learned that, by then, the church properties were owned by the diocese. However, Rev. Lonsdale requested insurance money collected for damage sustained from the 1908 fire.

Realizing the fire reduced the value of the loan's security, he later decided to call in the mortgage. Aware interest payments were in arrears, he took advantage of a provision in the contract that rendered the principal payable upon default of interest payments to revoke the loan.

To retire the lien and stabilize the finances of a church that were in disarray since its inception, Rev. Walter and the councilmen requested and obtained permission from Bishop Farrelly to negotiate a \$27,000 loan from *The Broadway Savings and Trust Company*. The bulk of the money, \$20,500, was to redeem the \$17,000 principal and \$3,500 interest owed on the Salford note. An additional \$5,000 was earmarked for the estimated cost of a Sisters' home and the remainder applied toward payments due parishioners and societies.

When the contract was cancelled on October 6, 1911, the diocese was represented by Attorney John G. White, a public-spirited citizen who was instrumental in founding the Cleveland Public Library. He was later named a Supreme Court Judge, and, although a Protestant layman, served as council for the bishop from 1870 until 1928.

According to a 1945 report to the diocese, a number of new parishioners joined the parish after it became affiliated with the diocese, and friction occasionally surfaced between these newcomers and some original members. This report cites the necessity of mediating these squabbles

as a probable cause for the constant change in administrators during this period of transition.

The situation was reversed, and our parish received its first permanent pastor since Rev. Kolaszewski, when Rev. Marion J. Orzechowski was appointed to that post in February, 1912. This forceful, yet diplomatic pastor, who enjoyed the complete confidence and support of Bishop Farrelly, not only guided our church through a difficult period of major expansion, but also succeeded in settling the congregation down to a normal parish life.



Rt. Rev. Marion J. Orzechowski, Pastor, 1912 to 1932

In response to a growing enrollment of over 250 pupils Rev. Orzechowski provided quarters to accommodate four nuns. He recognized these dedicated sisters were not only giving students a practical education, but were also preparing their charges for the future by Americanizing the curriculum as rapidly as circumstances would permit.

He was concerned with both spiritual and physical needs of the parish. On Sunday, July 13, 1913 Bishop Farrelly confirmed 180 members, including 35 adults, and in that same year plans were finalized and construction of a new church began.

The undertaking progressed as economically as possible. Labor and materials were furnished by the parish and work was supervised by Anthony F. Wasielewski, an itinerant church builder from Minneapolis. He worked from blueprints copied from Holy Family Parish, a church he constructed in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Despite his lack of formal credentials he built a well-conceived and soundly constructed structure.

By 1914 work had progressed to the point that *The Munich Studio* of Chicago could install the first two stained glass windows. Possibly due to disruption of normal commercial activity during World War I, this project was not completed until 1918.

No public notice of the event survives but diocesan records indicate that Bishop Farrelly dedicated the new church on Thursday, July 27, 1916. The old church continued to serve as a school and meeting hall until it was demolished in 1924.

In January, 1914, St. Stanislaus kindly offered \$5,000 towards our church's construction, but this was not taken advantage of at the time. However, the offer remained in effect and on September 1, 1914, these funds were deposited in our parish account for payment of overdue debts forwarded to the bishop for satisfaction.

Expanding enrollment, peaking at 1,350 students in 1929, had already brought on a need for additional classroom space as early as the mid-teens. An 80 by 64-foot, eight-room frame building, later nicknamed the 'bobhouse,' was planned and built in 1917 by an architect named Johnsen. After the present brick school, designed by Franz Warner, was erected by the W. Dunbar Company in 1925, this older structure provided space for storage, choir rehearsals, C.C.D. classes and other parish and civic activities. Maintenance cost for its aging flat roof and deteriorating flooring eventually became such a financial drain that the Church Committee was forced to have the structure leveled in August of 1980.

In 1918 a house and lot adjacent to our Lansing Avenue grounds was purchased and two additional homes were moved on this property. A convent to house 25 nuns was built out of these three structures.

The five-year building program took its toll on parish finances. Creditors who received no satisfaction from our church pressed the bishop for payment of past due claims and in some cases threatened or actually initiated lawsuits.

Discord arose in April, 1919, when Councilmen, blaming the pastor for a decline in church revenue, requested the bishop replace him, and the pastor's discharge of a non-diocesan priest, Rev. Wojciechowski, for creating divisions in the parish,

instigated a petition for the priest's return. The first crisis was defused by negotiations, the bishop's defense of Rev. Orzechowski's abilities, and a mid-July election of councilmen; the Rev. Wojciechowski affair faded away.



The new church under construction.



The regular January, 1920 council election was rigged in favor of the two candidates supported by the dissident faction. The ballot box was stuffed by various means to the extent that they received 300 votes each even though only 200 attended the meeting.

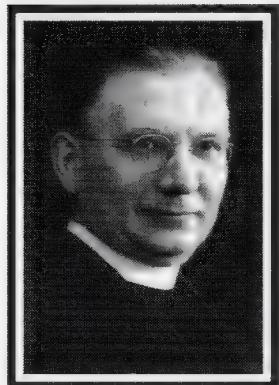
The results of this farce were overlooked until the newcomers took it upon themselves to withhold collections from the pastor and manage church finances themselves. The election was then annulled and these bogus councilmen were replaced with officially chosen members.

These disturbances soon passed into memory and the divided camps merged into a unified body that developed a strong attachment to their parish, a spirit very much in evidence today. The pastor, no longer distracted by conflicts, proceeded with his project of transforming nineteenth century church properties into a modern multi-structure parish.

To achieve this goal he purchased the lot behind the convent that faced Worley Avenue in 1924. This acquisition not only provided the extra land needed to erect our present school, but also gave our parish property its current boundaries, a

near two and one half acre plot of 18 lots that measure 280 feet deep with a 360 foot frontage on both Lansing and Worley Avenues.

The cornerstone for the school was laid in 1925 and the building was completed in 1926, the same year Rev. Orzechowski was named Rt. Reverend Monsignor. This builder and mediator was transferred to the pastorate of St. John Cantius Parish in 1932 and passed away there on May 1, 1939.



Rt. Rev. John  
Mlotkowski,  
Pastor,  
1932 to 1960



Rev. John Mlotkowski became pastor in May, 1932, and, like his predecessor, brought many improvements to the parish and was also honored with the title of Monsignor in 1940. The church was redecorated in 1935 to celebrate the silver anniversary of his ordination. Other accomplishments included enlarging the sacristies and building new garages in 1945 and replacing the older convent with a modern brick structure in 1954.

It was also during his pastorate that our parish name evolved from its longer form to the more familiar Immaculate Heart of Mary. Although this latter title appeared on some diocesan reports two decades earlier, it was first used on parish stationery in 1934. There has never been any official change of the parish name so both are still correct but by 1947 the present name had been used exclusively.

Tragedy struck at 2:00 AM July 24, 1950, when two thugs wearing stockings over their heads broke into the rectory. The hoodlums demanded proceeds from a carnival that had ended the previous night, and when Msgr. Mlotkowski, shaken by the unexpected intrusion, had difficulty opening the safe, one of them viciously struck him in the head. The pair escaped with \$13,000 from the Sunday collection and bazaar profits plus \$35 taken from the wallet of Fr. Krauze. The financial loss delayed the construction of the convent four years.

Another possible result of this ruthless attack was the effect on Msgr. Mlotkowski. His health

deteriorated to the point that Rev. Aloysius Dombrowski was appointed Parish Administrator on June 4, 1957. After the beloved pastor's death in March, 1960, Rev. Dombrowski was named his successor.

The interior of the church was again redecorated in 1958 and a modern 24 rank pipe organ was installed by the Wicks Organ Company in 1962. In 1964 ground was broken for a new rectory and administration building.

During excavation for the structure's basement, observers noticed a large round hole in the center of the diggings which sparked a rumor there was to be an indoor swimming pool. When open house was held on Sunday, June 13, 1965, parishioners were eager to view this expected luxury. Anticipation changed to chuckles when they learned the hole was dug to provide a base for the spiral staircase.

From August 19, 1969, until the end of his appointment, Rev. John Deka acted as administrator during Rev. Dombrowski's recuperation from a serious heart seizure. By 1971 the pastor's declining health made it necessary to designate Rev. Francis Bartnikowski parish administrator. Rev. Bartnikowski was made Vicar Coadjutor in 1974 and named pastor on June 11, 1976.

Rev. Dombrowski was declared Pastor Emeritus with the privilege of lifelong residency at the parish. However, within a few years he moved to St. Augustine Manor and remained there until his death on April 9, 1990.

The longest continuing parish organization, the Board of Trustees, was instituted when the church was organized on May 3, 1894. It was originally composed of elected members who managed the business affairs of the parish.

Sometime after our church was admitted into the diocese, the body evolved into a Church Committee composed of ushers who were initially elected but later appointed by the pastor. These collectors conducted the annual fundraisers and acted as advisors to the pastor on matters connected with church properties.

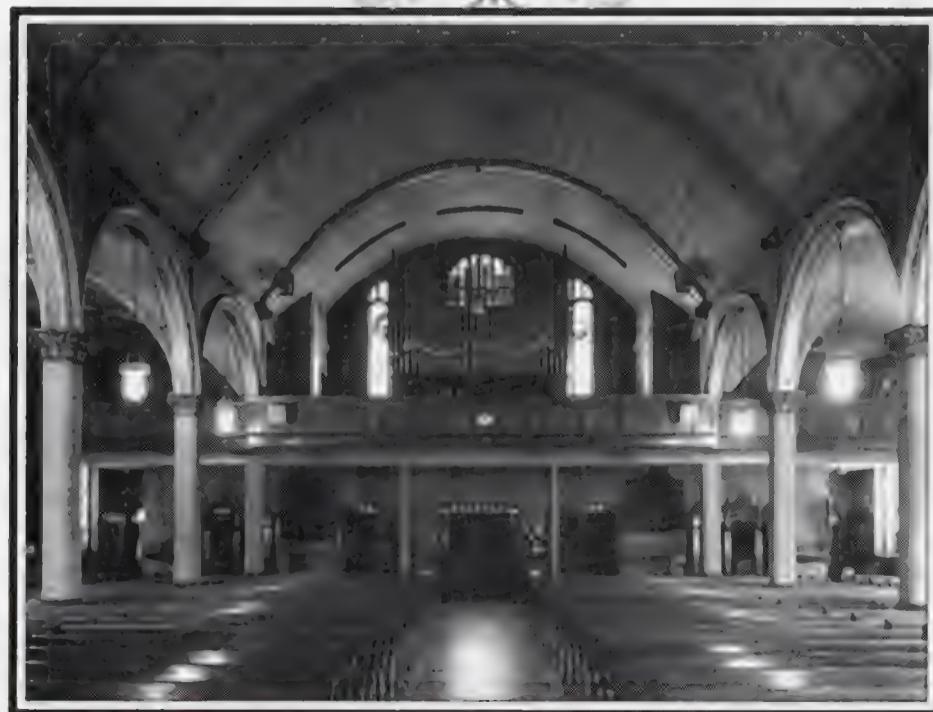


Rev. Aloysius  
Dombrowski,  
Pastor,  
1960 to 1976





Sanctuary of the church prior to the remodeling in 1958.



This *Felgemaker* organ was replaced in 1962 by a new *Wicks* instrument.



Construction of the parish rectory and administration building in 1964.

Except when the pastor appointed someone with special qualifications, four councilmen were elected by the group. Their principal duty was to audit and sign the annual parish financial report submitted to the bishop. This last remnant of our church's beginning faded into history in 1983.

Vatican Council II (1962-1965) called for universal participation of the laity in the governance of parishes. The parish Pastoral Council and the parish Finance Council today serve the pastor as his principle consultative bodies, assisting him in his roles as shepherd and steward of the parish.

The parish's ninetieth anniversary in 1984 was marked by redecorating the church interior, installing new carpeting in the nave and constructing confessionals in the belfry areas. In 1987 the stained glass windows were repaired and furnished with outside plastic coating to protect them from the elements and vandals.

A June 1972 report inaugurated by Bishop Issenmann to determine effects of population shifts on urban parishes revealed that between 1960 and 1969 the parish lost 49 percent of its members, had a 51 percent decrease in school enrollment, and infant baptisms, a measure of future parish and community stability, dropped 56 percent. A 1980-1983 study of 1980 census results reflected this same pattern.

At a March 1985 Urban Pastor's Convention, a core group, presided over by Auxiliary Bishop Lyke, was formed to establish an Urban Region Planning Process. By November, preparations were made for April 1986 – April 1987 sessions to evaluate and make specific recommendations for future use of parish resources.

During one of these meetings, Superintendant of Catholic Schools, Rev. John Murphy, and Sister Christine Vladimiroff, Secretary of Education, proposed that our school be merged with that of Sacred Heart Parish, an idea the Body endorsed.

Emotions ran high for those on both sides of the issue when the plan was announced. However, a realization that rising costs and declining enrollments were jeopardizing the future survival of these schools prompted separate March 19, 1987 letters to Bishop Pilla from the Parish staff and ten

of the 16 members of the Parish Council. Both communications recommended combining these schools into one facility with two campuses. In a March 26th letter, His Excellency gave consent to their proposal, directing the plan be in operation for the 1987-1988 school year.

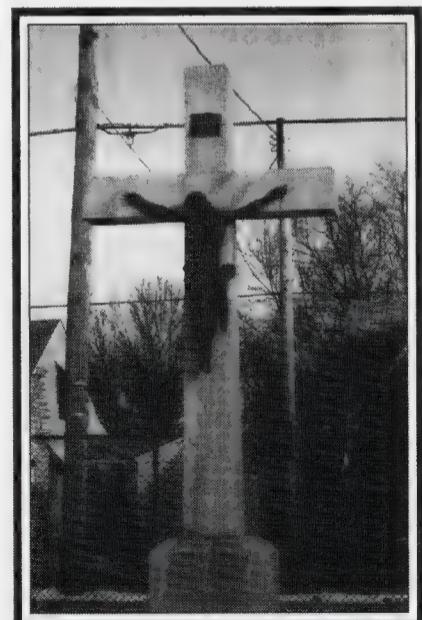
Legal requirements for rechartering were fulfilled when a new name honoring both parishes, Jesus and Mary School, was chosen for this dual institution.

Robert and Cecilia Walkowiak donated their funeral home properties to the parish on September 17, 1988. This facility, located across the street from the parish, was appropriately named the Marian Center. It provided a convenient chapel for weekday Masses and much needed space for other parish activities.

A series of health problems forced Rev. Bartnikowski to petition Bishop Pilla for an assignment with less strenuous duties. This was granted when he was named pastor of Assumption Parish, Grafton, Ohio on June 12, 1991. From that date until the appointment of Rev. Stanley Klasinski as pastor on September 3, 1991, Assistant Pastor, Rev. John Seabold, acted as Administrator Pro Tem. Rev. Seabold then took a leave of absence to undergo surgery and followed this with appointment to St. Clement Parish on February 1, 1992.

Title to St. Mary's Cemetery was turned over to the diocese in 1908 and it was later included in the roster of Diocesan Cemeteries. However, responsibility for its administration and upkeep, as well as the privilege of limiting burial to parishioners, was retained by the parish.

When landfill operations made a significant tract of hitherto unusable land available, the additional number of



Dedication memorial at St. Mary Cemetery, erected in 1899.

plots made it impractical to continue St. Mary's as a private cemetery. On April 1, 1992, Bishop Pilla authorized transfer of management and maintenance to the *Catholic Cemeteries Association*.

The Marian Center was opened to contribute to efficient parish operations and provide some relief from high utility costs. However, insurance and maintenance costs made its operation a liability rather than an asset. In May 1992, a decision was made to donate the property to the *Broadway Area Housing Coalition*.

The contract stated that after the building was converted into a single family dwelling, 80 percent of any profits from its sale were to be given to the parish. There was also a stipulation that the home was to be initially offered to a qualifying parishioner.

Even as these closing words are being written,

parish history is being made. Parishioners and friends are celebrating in anticipation of its hundredth anniversary with events that can only be recalled by future historians.

This festive period is also a reminder of our inheritance. Our parish founders passed down more than church properties; they bequeathed the spirit of unity that enabled them to establish their church through their own efforts. As Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish moves toward its second century of ministry by welcoming immigrants, celebrating our Polish Catholic heritage, schooling our young, and serving the community, this legacy will turn current problems into an opportunity to face the future with confidence. Working as one to maintain His house of worship will permit Our Lord to show us the way.



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---

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May 3, 1894 to October 7, 1908  
Rev. Andrew Ryczek assisted him from 1905

**Rev. Methodius Kielar, O.F.M.**  
Adm. from October 7, 1908 to January 21, 1909

**Rev. Albert Migdalski**  
Adm. from January 21, 1909 to October 4, 1909

**Rev. John Darowski**  
Adm. from October 1909 to July 1910

**Rev. Bronislaus Walter**  
Adm. from July 1910 to February 11, 1912

**Msgr. Marion Orzechowski**  
February 15, 1912 to May 17, 1932

**Msgr. John Mlotkowski**  
May 17, 1932 to March 22, 1960

**Rev. Aloysius Dombrowski**  
June 14, 1960 to June 1, 1976

**Rev. Frank Bartnikowski**  
June 11, 1976 to June 12, 1991

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September 3, 1991



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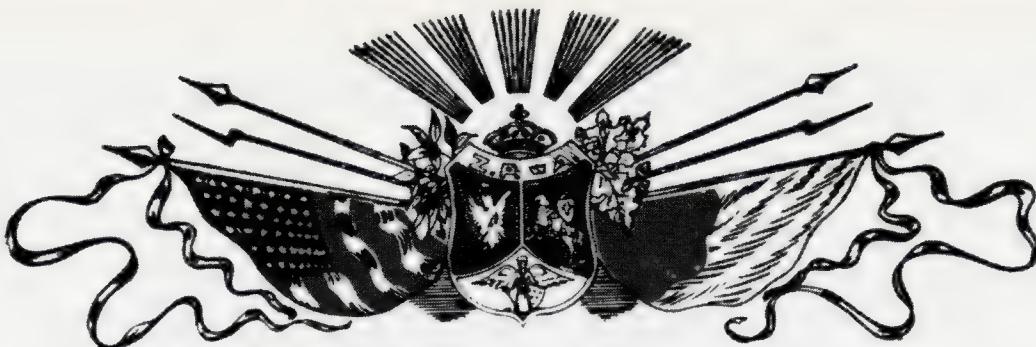
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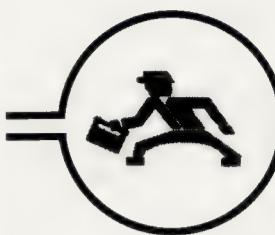


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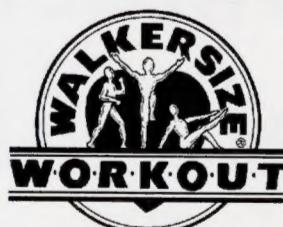
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